REVEALED AT LAST!
THE SECRET OF RA's AL GHUL!
50¢
ALL NEW!
NO. 335
MAY
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
BAT MAN
THE FINAL DEADLY BATTLE HIGH ATOP A FLAMING VOLCANO!
C-563
05
0 70989 30430

Hand Timer

Fun timer for non-professional events such as model races, sports, etc. Full pocket-watch size with chain link. Spring operated. Start and stop button. Sweep hand. Calibrated dial.
☐ 2020. Hand Timer... $1.69

1001 THINGS FREE

Get FREE articles, novelties, books, stamps, coins, show tickets, games, films, products, maps, toys, food-drug samples, science materials, records, jewelry, hobbies, travel info., etc. Mammoth directory of over 1000 free offers with names and addresses. 64 pages.
☐ 1018. "Things Free" Directory $1.25

MAIL ORDERS FOR ALL ITEMS ON THIS PAGE TO:

JOHNSON SMITH COMPANY

Dept. 332, 35075 Automation, Mt. Clemens, Mich. 48043

Things You Never Knew Existed

Since 1914

MONEY BACK GUARANTEE

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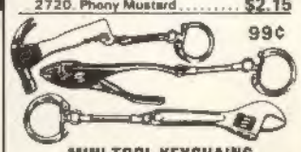
Phony Squirt Catsup

Plastic containers look like they should hold the real thing. So when you "squirt" at friends or relatives they'll think their clothes are ruined. Red or yellow string shoots out causing big commotion. Every prankster should have both of these in his arsenal for special occasions.
2639. Phony Catsup $2.15
2720. Phony Mustard $2.15



99¢

MINI-TOOL KEYCHAINS

Working miniatures of full size counterparts. Each with fine quality key ring on durable snake chain. Approx. 3" long.
5495. Plier Keychain ..... 99¢
5497. Wrench Keychain ..... 99¢
5496. Hammer Keychain ..... 99¢

Flying Helicopter Goes Up To 50-Ft High!

Only $2.95

Flying authentic replica of helicopter used by armed forces. Giant 16" wingspread. High impact plastic.
☐ 2065. Flying Helicopter $2.95

SLOT Machine BANK

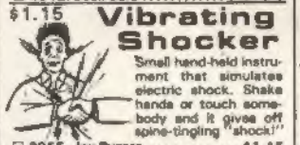
Las Vegas Replica. Take a chance. Insert coin, pull "one arm bandit" and watch dials spin. Big payoff if you hit! Collect money for your bank. Smooth action. 6" high. Not for gambling.
☐ 4082. Slot Bank $8.95

Secret Book Safe

Looks like attractively bound book but opens to reveal combination lock safe. Keep valuable papers, jewels, money, etc. hidden away. 4 x 6 x 1½".
☐ 4012. Book Safe $2.95

$1.15

Vibrating Shocker



Small hand-held instrument that simulates electric shock. Shake hands or touch somebody and it gives off spine-tingling "shock!"
☐ 2956. Joy Buzzer $1.15

SURPRISE PACKAGE $1.00

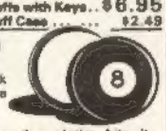
Pleasant surprise and bargain. Includes new samples, factory surplus, special novelties, etc. Most worth much more.
☐ 2997. Surprise Bargain $1.00
☐ 9518. Deluxe Surprise Bargain .. $2.95

POLICE STYLE HANDCUFFS

CHROME PLATED STEEL

☐ 9043. Handcuffs with Keys.. $6.95
☐ 9048. Handcuff Case $2.49

Crazy-Action Billiard Balls



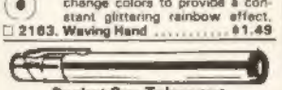
Great way to break up a serious game of pool. Looks like regular ball until your unsuspecting victim hits it. Wanders erratically all over table with strangest "English" you've ever seen. Regulation size.
☐ 2981. Crazy Cue Ball $4.95
☐ 2967. Crazy 8 Ball $4.95

$1.49

RAINBOW WAVING HAND

Bright, colorful, full size plastic hand mounts with flexible suction cup on any smooth surface. For cars, vans, trucks, doors, windows, etc. As hand "waves," large silver prism dots on fingers change colors to provide a constant glittering rainbow effect.
☐ 2163. Waving Hand $1.49

Pocket Spy Telescope



Powerful, yet fits pocket like pen. Magnifies several times original size. Brings distant objects closer. Attractive finish.
☐ 6724. Spy Scope $2.25

Red Flasher Light

$3.75 Police Style Warning Light. Big dome flashes on & off in bright red light visible far away. With suction cup base. Sticks tightly to any smooth surface like top of car. Runs on flashlight batteries. About 4".
☐ 7655. Flasher $3.75

Unbeatable Self Defense

Learn Judo, Jiu-Jitsu, Boxing, Wrestling, Muscle Building, Self Defense Tricks. Well illustrated, easy to understand paper covered books. Up to 95 pages long.
☐ 1265. 50 Tricks of Self Defense $1.49
☐ 1858. How to Build Mighty Muscles $1.49
☐ 1271. How to Box $1.00
☐ 1266. Combat Judo $1.48

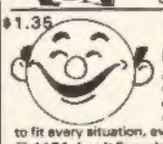
SNAKE NUT CAN $2.95

Offer to friends or leave on table or counter, stand back & watch the fun. Somebody is sure to want to help themselves sooner or later. Looks like real can of mixed nuts but is loaded with cloth-covered 30" spring "snake" that shoots out. Works on even most suspicious victims.
2927. Snake Nut Can. $2.95

Hercules Wrist Band $1.65

Gives rugged, masculine appearance. Double strap for "he-man" look. Adjustable. Get two - one for each arm. Genuine leather.
☐ 2112. Each . $1.65
Set of 2. $2.95

$1.35



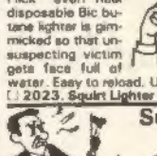
1001 Insults, Putdowns, For all Occasions

A putdown, barb, wisecrack or snappy comeback for every occasion. Find one to fit every situation, every type person.
☐ 1171. Insult Encyclopedia $1.35

SQUIRT LIGHTER

$3.95

Funniest "Bic Flick" ever! Real disposable Bic butane lighter is gimmicked so that unsuspecting victim gets face full of water. Easy to reload. Use over & over.
☐ 2023. Squirt Lighter $3.95



Super Insult Cards

Silent revenge for those who like to "Get Even," not mad. 50 little cards printed with barbs & putdowns for most every occasion. Tells 'em off without wasting your time & breath.
☐ 2500. Insult Cards ..... 99¢

"Whack Jack" Tension Reliever

This pudgy, balding tension reliever will work wonders. When tension builds up just give him a smash, squash or stomp & feel those frustrations drain away. Soft, flexible vinyl. 6" tall. Comes with assorted, reusable "name-calling" labels you can affix to the base (Boss, Husband, Partner, etc., plus several blanks so you can write your own).
☐ 3995. Whack Jack $3.95

Deluxe Revolving Police Style Warning Light Only $7.95

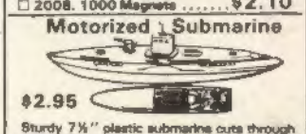
Revolves just like authentic police emergency light. Attach to car roof or dashboard in seconds. Also makes excellent psychedelic party light. Really get into the music & the mood with brilliant red beams revolving eerily around the room. With suction cup base for fast attachment. About 6" tall. Uses standard batteries.
☐ 9527. Rotating Police Light ... $7.95

Foam Lighter

Looks harmless enough ...until they try to use it to light up. What happens next is unbelievable! Special gimmicked lighter erupts like a volcano, shooting & gushing foam several feet into the air. Creates shower of fun & laughs. Complete with "ammo" for about 20 "blasts." Water soluable. Won't stain. Additional refills available.
☐ 2059. Volcano Lighter $5.95
☐ 2060. Refill $2.95

1000 TINY MAGNETS

Fantastic fun bargain. Do tricks, stunts, experiments. Arrange in millions of patterns. Stick together with own power. Easy to change. Each 1/8x1/8x1/16".
☐ 2008. 1000 Magnets $2.10



Motorized Submarine

$2.95

Sturdy 7½" plastic submarine cuts through water powered by battery operated heavy-duty underwater motor. Runs on pen-cell battery. 6" motor is waterproof sealed, with adjustable rubber & built-in switch.
☐ 2992. Submarine $2.95

GIANT BALLOONS

$5.95

8 - Ft. High BALLOONS

Weather balloon made of neoprene rubber. Do entertaining stunts, advertising effects, science fun, etc. 24 ft. around. Can be seen for miles
☐ 3010. 8 Ft. Balloon $5.95

ELECTRONIC LIE & LOVE DETECTOR

USEFUL & FUN GREAT GIFT!

Registers emotions, feelings, reactions. Test lovers, friends, relatives for lies, compatability. Great for party fun, scientific, psychological experiments. Works similar to expensive polygraph lie detector, but now available in low-priced transistorized pocket model. Easy to use. Hand-held electrodes. Easy-read dial. Complete instructions. About 4"x3". Operates on standard battery (not incl.). In attractive gift box.
☐ 9108. Lie/Love Tester $5.95

Joke Gum

Pucker Gum. Putrid.
☐ 2738. Pkg. of 5 .. 69¢
Red Hot Gum. Blazing.
☐ 2724. Pkg. of 5 .. 69¢
Garlic Gum. Awful.
☐ 2735. Pkg. of 5 .. 69¢

BLEEDING SKULL CANDLE

Most chilling horror effect we've seen in years. When lighted brilliant red "blood" oozes over the forehead & dawn the face. Great for haunted houses, parties, room decoration. About 4½" tall.
☐ 3072. Skull Candle $2.49

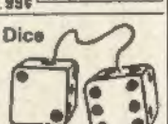
GIANT PUPPET EAGLE

Looks mean. Big 12" wingspan. Realistic flying look as he dangles from his heavy elastic string. Made of soft, pliable rubber. Excellent detail.
3119. Puppet Eagle $1.95

Make-Up Kit

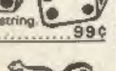
Rock Star and Horror Effects. Easy on-off 7 piece kit. For stage use, clowns, comic disguises, monsters, etc. Remove with soap, water.
☐ 7001. Make-Up. 99¢

Giant Foam Dice



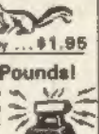
For car, bike, room, most anywhere. Each brightly colored foam rubber die is 2-1/4" high. Pair is connected with 6" string.
☐ 2004. Foam Dice ..... 99¢

Squirrel Call



Brings them right to you. Hand operated. ☐ 4290. Only ... $1.95

Magnet Lifts 100 Pounds!



Lifts up to 100 Pounds SOLID STEEL! Tested & proven on steel block. GO TREASURE HUNTING. Do amazing stunts. 1001 uses. Pocket size.
☐ 4006. Lifts 50 lbs. $4.25
☐ 4055. Lifts 100 lbs. $6.25

$3.95

Motorized Flying Jet

Authentic replica of Phantom Jet Fighter really flies. Amazing speed. Hangs from ceiling by means of included self-stick mount & several feet of near invisible line. Ready-to-fly except for standard batteries (not incl.). On-off switch. 7½" long.
☐ 2083. Jet Fighter $3.95

No-Hands Binocular Glasses

Worn like regular glasses, but gives you magnified, close-up look of field glasses. Follows the action when you do, yet so lightweight & convenient you'll soon forget you're wearing them! Easy-turn, adjustable focus lets you vary lens distance, with 10 possible positions.
9396. Bino-Glasses $2.95

Portable Electric Fan

$1.79

Keep cool wherever you go. Handy pocket size. Powerful. Use standard battery.
☐ 6665. Pocket Fan. $1.79

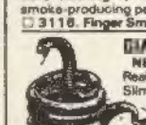
"Smoke" From Your Fingertips

99¢

Hundreds of magic or joke uses. Hands shown to be empty, then suddenly smoke appears from fingertips! Do over & over. No sleight; no manipulation. Nothing is lit or burned. Invisible smoke-producing paste spreads on fingers.
☐ 3116. Finger Smoke ..... 99¢

GIANT SLIMY SNAKE

NEARLY 3 FEET LONG!



Realistic. Threatening glare. Slimy feel. Guaranteed big & especially scary.
☐ 3885. Giant Snake . $2.95

Prismatic Decals

Brilliant colors. Stick anywhere. With light diffracting prismatic background. Firebird is 7" wide, Snake is 3½" wide.
7908. Firebird $2.95
7909. American Snake $1.35

Big Bang Fun Snaps

Real Bang-Up Fun! Squeeze 'em! Toss 'em! Step on 'em! Gives BIG BANG! Amazingly loud, yet you can pop them between your fingers without harm. Box of 50. 2 for $2.75.
☐ 2051. Fun Snaps $1.49

AIR CAR HOVERCRAFT RIDES ON AIR!

$7.95

New HOVERCRAFT glides like magic over floors, sidewalks, EVEN WATER! Sleek car of the future uses principle of air suspension to ride on cushion of air above most any surface. Colorful plastic, 8"x9"x2" high. 4" propeller. 48" control line from push button remote control unit. Simply press switch and this beauty rises and floats in any direction you wish. Illustrates friction-less motion principles of full size experimental vehicles already in use. Not a kit. Ready-to-run except for 2 "D" batteries (not included)
☐ 7606. Hover Craft $7.95

$1.85

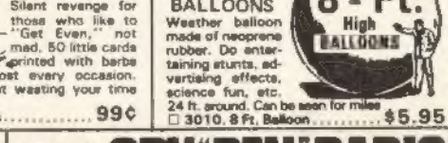
Greatest illusion of the century! Apparently see bones thru skin, see thru clothes, etc. Amaze and embarrass everyone! Regular size glasses with built-in optical illusion.
☐ 3762. XRAY Specs Only ..... $1.85 Per Pair

MIDGET CAMERA

$1.95

Guaranteed To Take Pictures! Black & White or Color! Uses standard 127 film. Takes 16 wallet size or 3½ x 5" shots per roll. Get developed anywhere or develop yourself. Camera is approx. size of cigarette pack, 3½ x 3 x 2". Weighs less than 2 oz. For surprise, regular or candid pictures. Heavy-duty plastic construction. With eye-level viewfinder. Single action shutter with lens.
K4906. Midget Camera $1.95
K4907. Black/white 127 film, roll $1.65
K4903. Kodak Color Film, roll $2.55

SPY "PEN" RADIO



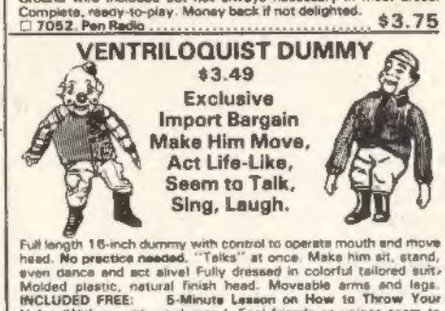
Real Working Radio Hidden in Pen Case!

Fits Into Your Pocket Like Pen!

Hear SPORTS, MUSIC, LATEST NEWS AND EVENTS in office, school, bed, etc. Slips into pocket like ordinary pen. Tiny earphone for listening. Full range tuner. Guaranteed to pull in several stations in your area, although reception will vary from place to place. No additional expense. NO BATTERIES NEEDED. Self-powered solid state circuit. Germanium diode type radio (pulls in radio waves from air). Ground wire included but not always necessary in most areas. Complete, ready-to-play. Money back if not delighted.
☐ 7052. Pen Radio $3.75

VENTRILOQUIST DUMMY

$3.49



Exclusive Import Bargain Make Him Move, Act Life-Like, Seem to Talk, Sing, Laugh.

Full length 16-inch dummy with control to operate mouth and move head. **No practice needed.** "Talks" at once. Make him sit, stand, even dance and act alive! Fully dressed in colorful tailored suit. Molded plastic, natural finish head. Moveable arms and legs. **INCLUDED FREE: 5-Minute Lesson on How to Throw Your Voice** (With or without dummy). Fool friends as voices seem to come from under bed, behind doors, etc.
☐ 6156. Archie The Dummy $3.49
☐ 6075. Dumbo The Clown $3.49

Free 1981 Catalog 1600 Novelties

World Famous catalog of novelties, pranks, jokes, cloth patches, hobbies, scientific supplies, fun-makers, planes & boats, gadgets, time-savers, photo & optical goods, jewelry, disguises, music items, stamps, coins, puzzles, fortune tellers, radios, bikes & accessories, telescopes, banks, office & artist supplies, engines, motors, sports, books, models, magic, much more.

☐ Yes—Send Me Your Catalog. I have enclosed 10¢ postage (Canadian 50¢).

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FROM THE DIARY OF AL TALMÜN, 17TH CENTURY HISTORIAN:
"HE HAD SO MUCH TO OFFER, BUT HIS OFFERINGS WERE EVIL. HE HELD THE SECRETS OF LIFE, BUT PREFERRED TO DEAL IN DEATH. HE WAS A TYRANT AND A BUTCHER BECAUSE HE CARED FOR NEITHER THE LIVING NOR THE DEAD. HE WAS AN IMMORTAL WHO TO BECOME IMMORTAL HAD GIVEN HIS SOUL IN EXCHANGE. HIS NAME WAS RA'S AL GHUL AND HE WAS BORN IN THE FIERY PITS OF HELL. MAY HE RETURN FROM WHENCE HE CAME."
HEED MY WORDS, BATMAN, AND THINK CAREFULLY BEFORE YOU SPEAK.
OBEY ME AND I OFFER YOU IMMORTALITY!
REFUSE ME, AND YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS WILL DIE!
NOW, BATMAN, CHOOSE AND CHOOSE WISELY!
J-7148
the LAZARUS AFFAIR
CONCLUDING A FOUR-PART NOVEL FEATURING
THE BATMAN
CREATED BY
BOB KANE

CHAPTER FOUR

ASHES TO ASHES!

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FRANK McLAUGHLIN
ARTISTS
BEN ODA
LETTERER
ADRIENNE ROY
COLORIST
PAUL LEVITZ
EDITOR

BATMAN ®, (USPS 048-340), Vol. 42, No. 338, May, 1981. Published monthly by DC COMICS INC., 75 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10019. Second Class Postage paid at New York, N.Y. and Additional Mailing Offices. Copyright © 1981 by DC Comics Inc. All Rights Reserved. The stories, characters and incidents mentioned in this magazine are entirely fictional. No actual persons, living or dead, are intended or should be inferred. Printed in U.S.A.

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Advertising Representative, Sanford Schwartz & Co., 355 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017. (212) 391-1400

SUBSCRIPTION DEPT., DC COMICS INC., 14 Vanderventer Ave., Port Washington, N.Y. 11050. Annual subscription rate $6.00. Outside U.S.A. $7.00

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THE BATMAN'S GRIM EYES NARROW AS HE STUDIES HIS CAPTOR'S GAUNT FACE...
RĀ'S AL GHŪL WAITS FOR HIS ANSWER...
HIS WORDS COME WITH DELIBERATE HESITATION, AND WHAT HE SAYS IS SAID WITH NO TRACE OF EMOTION...
YOU WANT ME, YOU'VE GOT ME. YOU'VE WON, RĀ'S.
WHAT?!?
YOU MISERABLE TRAITOR! YOU'D SELL US ALL OUT!
MUTATES! STOP HIM! DESTROY HIM!
NO! LET ME HANDLE FARADAY!
HE'S A FOOL! WHY WASTE HIM WHEN HE COULD BE USED IN THE MINES?
I KNOW WE'VE BEEN FIGHTING, BATMAN, BUT HOW COULD YOU DO THIS TO US?
AGGHH!
CHOK!
I HAVE MY REASONS...
IF YOU WERE AN ADULT YOU'D KNOW WHEN NOT TO FIGHT.
ENOUGH, DETECTIVE. YOU HAVE JOINED ME AND THAT IS ALL THAT MATTERS NOW.
EXCEPT FOR ONE LAST DETAIL.
MY DAUGHTER, TALIA. SHE WAS READY TO BETRAY ME FOR YOU!
2

WHAT SHALL I DO FOR THAT ACT OF TREASON?
GIVE HER TO ME. SHE'S TO BE MINE!
AN EXCELLENT DECISION, MANHUNTER. I WOULD NOT HAVE ENJOYED INFLICTING PAIN ON HER.
TALIA, TAKE OUR NEW FRIEND ON A TOUR OF INFINITY ISLAND.
I WILL JOIN YOU SHORTLY.
AS FOR THESE OTHERS, RETURN THEM TO THE MINES!
I SHALL DEAL WITH THEM ONCE I'VE DECIDED ON SOMETHING... SUITABLE!
YOU GAVE HIM HIS FREEDOM? BUT YOU KNOW HE IS LYING!
OF COURSE HE IS, SALTZER. THE BATMAN COULD NO MORE JOIN ME THAN I COULD HIM!
BUT I HAVE ALWAYS RESPECTED THE BATMAN.
RESPECTED--? BUT HE IS A FOOL!
HE IS MANY THINGS, SALTZER, BUT A FOOL IS NOT ONE OF THEM.
3

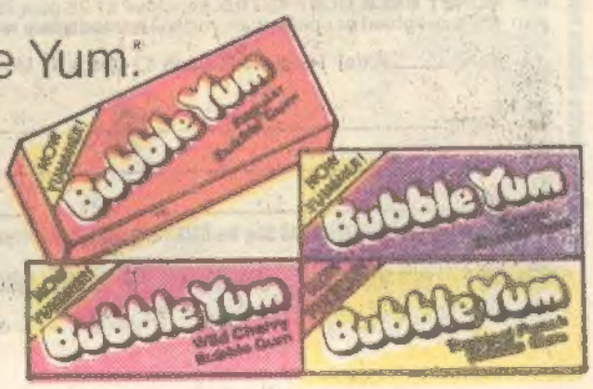
I RESPECT HIM AS I DO THE POISONOUS COBRA.
HE PLAYS HIS GAMES, LURES YOU TO HIM, FEIGNS WEAKNESS, AND IS DEADLY WHEN HE MUST BE.
BUT, YOU OBSERVE HIS MOVES, YOU LEARN HOW HE THINKS...
AND, WHEN HE IS READY TO STRIKE--
--YOU STRIKE AND SLAY FIRST!
WHERE IS MY COBRA NOW, SALTZER?
YOUR DAUGHTER IS ABOUT TO SHOW HIM THE LAZARUS PIT, SIR.
EXCELLENT! THE PIT OF LIFE. WHERE BETTER TO HAVE HIM MEET HIS DEATH!
CONTINUE TO OBSERVE THE SCREENS, SALTZER. YOU MAY YET LEARN HOW TO MANAGE THE UNMANAGEABLE!
4

CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING

Now the Number Yum™ taste is even Yummier.

Get the famous taste of new Bubble Yum.® It's yummier than ever with fantastic taste and a smoother chew.

And the flavor lasts a long, long, looong time.



FOR A WORLD OF FUN...GROW *AMAZING* LIVE

SEA-MONKEYS®

CREATE THESE *REAL LIVE PETS* WITH BIO-CRYSTALS!

JUST ADD WATER and before **YOUR VERY EYES**, you'll see adorable baby Sea-Monkeys being **BORN ALIVE!** Created with **NEW**, patented **Bio-Crystals**, Sea-Monkeys are ***ABSOLUTELY GUARANTEED*** to ***GROW!*** Millions of boys and girls have already tried it at ***OUR RISK***, and ***gasped in amazement*** as **IT WORKED!** Now **YOU TOO** can own **DOZENS** and DOZENS of these **CRAZY** loveable **FUN-PETS®!**

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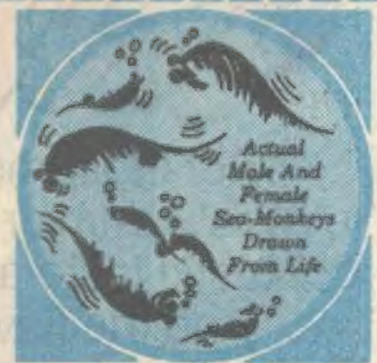

MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE

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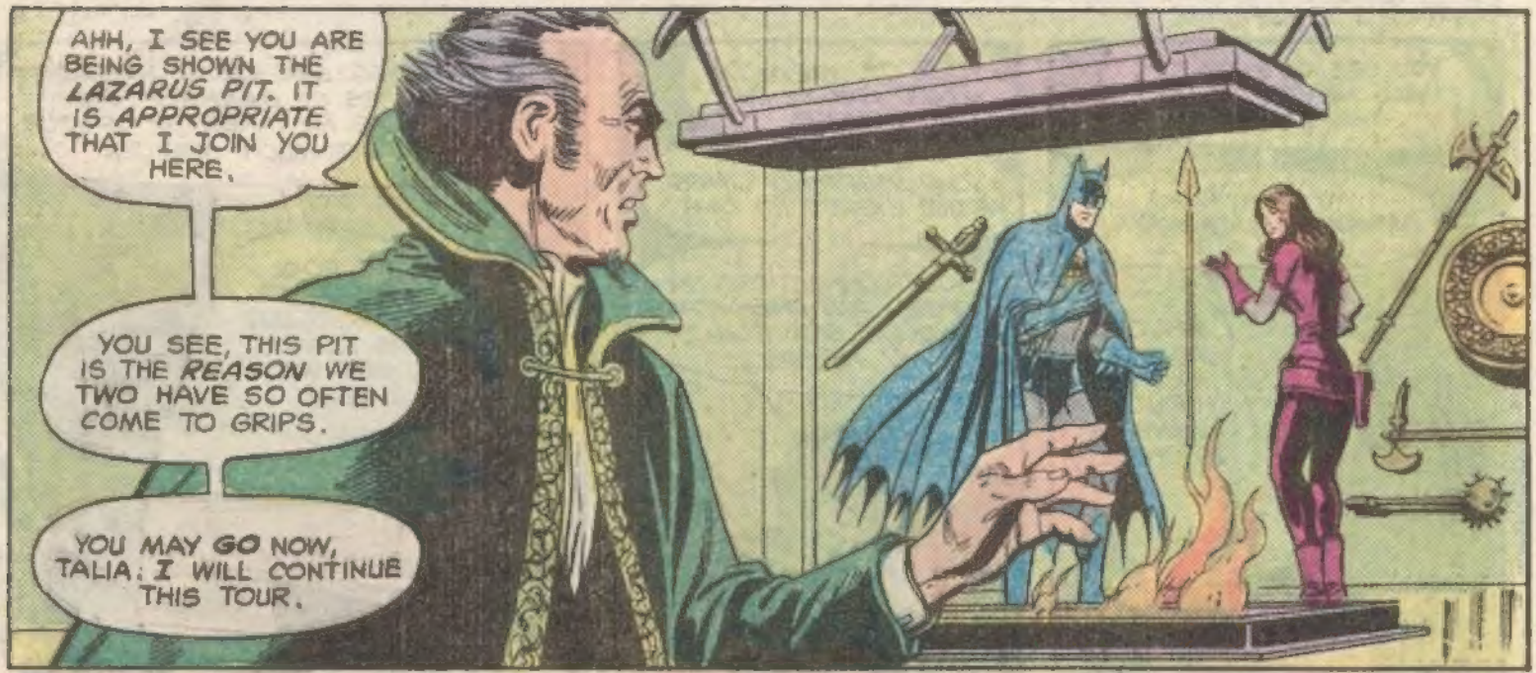
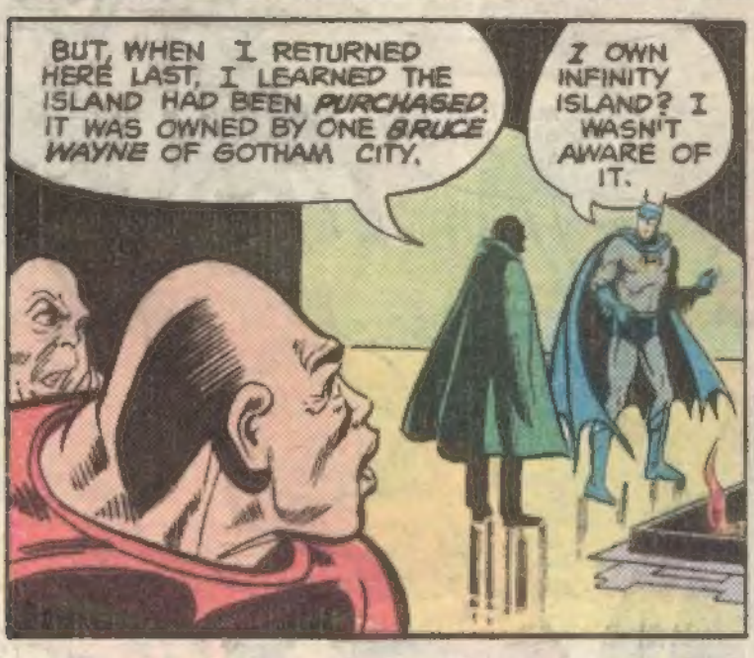
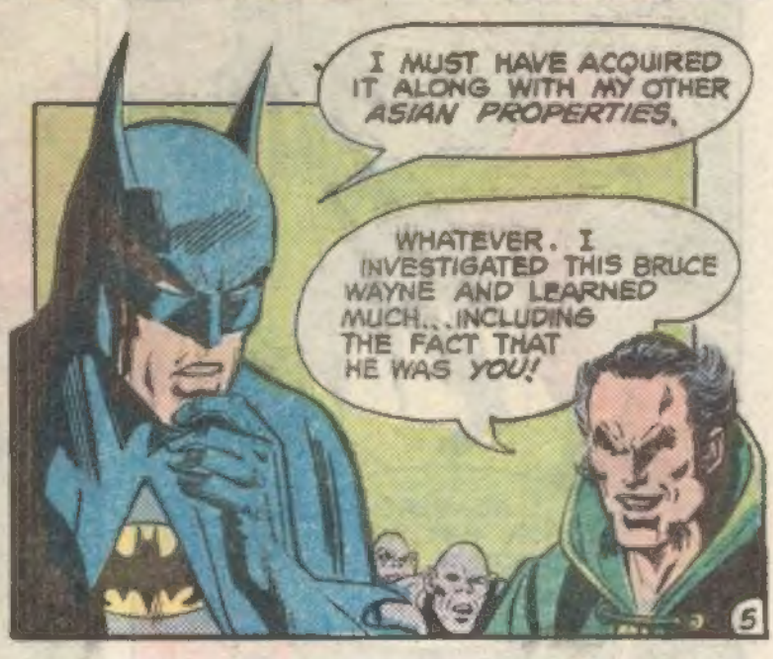

AHH, I SEE YOU ARE BEING SHOWN THE LAZARUS PIT. IT IS APPROPRIATE THAT I JOIN YOU HERE.
YOU SEE, THIS PIT IS THE REASON WE TWO HAVE SO OFTEN COME TO GRIPS.
YOU MAY GO NOW, TALIA; I WILL CONTINUE THIS TOUR.

AFTER TALIA LEAVES...
I HAVE LIVED FOR MANY CENTURIES, AND THE LAZARUS PIT IS MY SECRET.
FOR EACH TIME MY BODY DIES, IT GRANTS ME LIFE ANEW!
AND YOU USE IT TO KEEP TALIA YOUNG?

THE PIT'S LIFE-ESSENCE WORKS ONLY ON ME. IT WOULD DESTROY ANY OTHER.
NO, I HAVE OTHER METHODS, BUT WE WILL COME TO THEM LATER.

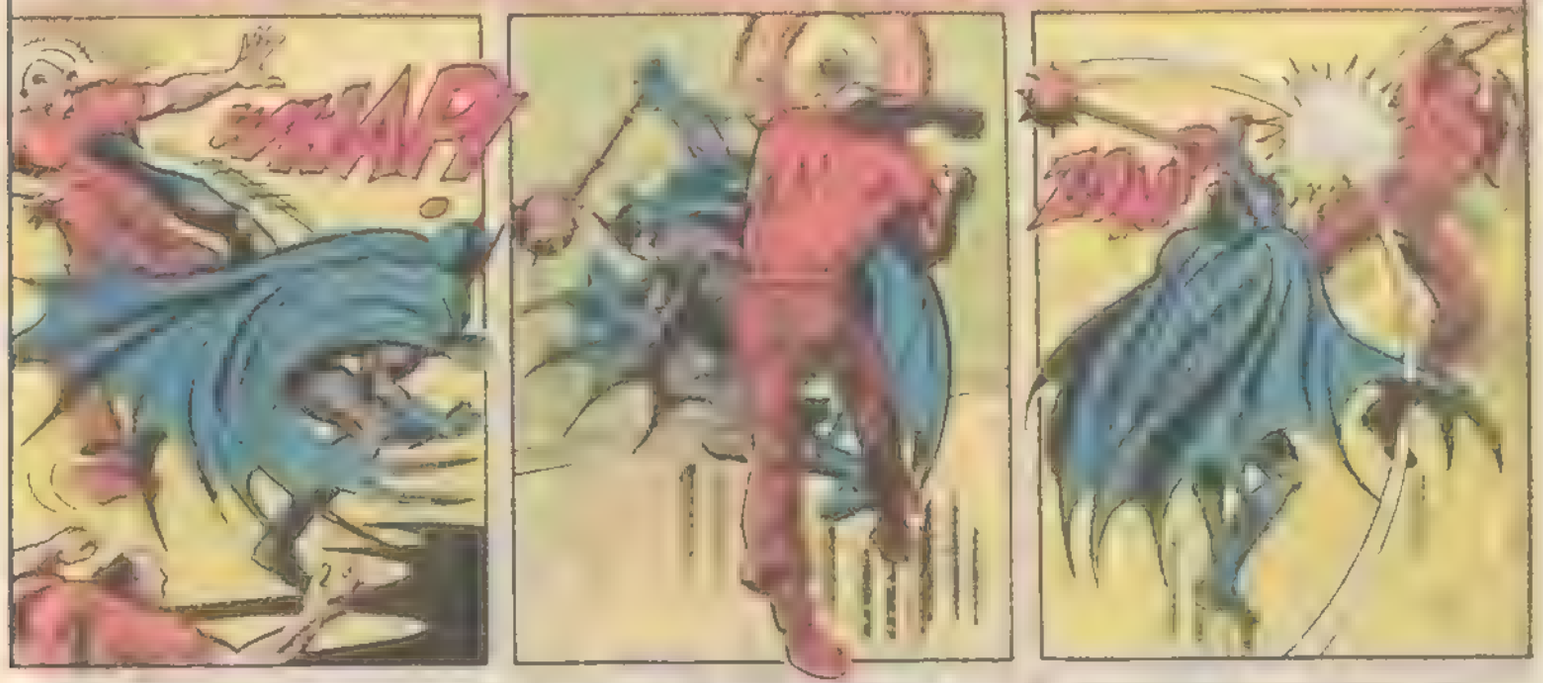
CENTURIES AGO I DISCOVERED THIS PIT. I LEARNED THEN HOW TO HARNESS ITS POWER.
AND HOW TO TAKE ITS LIFE-GIVING LIQUIDS WITH ME WHEN I TRAVELLED.


BUT, WHEN I RETURNED HERE LAST, I LEARNED THE ISLAND HAD BEEN PURCHASED. IT WAS OWNED BY ONE BRUCE WAYNE OF GOTHAM CITY.
I OWN INFINITY ISLAND? I WASN'T AWARE OF IT.


I MUST HAVE ACQUIRED IT ALONG WITH MY OTHER ASIAN PROPERTIES.
WHATEVER. I INVESTIGATED THIS BRUCE WAYNE AND LEARNED MUCH...INCLUDING THE FACT THAT HE WAS YOU!

YOU SEE, DETECTIVE, I WAS NEVER AFTER THE BATMAN.
MY GOAL WAS ALWAYS BRUCE WAYNE!
BRUCE WAYNE'S MILLIONS; BRUCE WAYNE'S EMPIRE!
YOUR OIL WEALTH WOULD ADD TO MY POWER.
YOUR SHIPPING LINES WOULD EXPAND MY OWN.
YOUR CONNECTIONS IN STEEL AND CHEMICALS WOULD SERVE ALL MY NEEDS.
I EMPLOYED GREGORIAN FALSTAFF IN THE HOPES OF BANKRUPTING YOU, TO MAKE MY TAKEOVER OF YOUR EMPIRE THAT MUCH SIMPLER.
THE FOOL FAILED, OF COURSE, BUT AS ALWAYS, I GET WHAT I WANT.
I WANTED YOU, DETECTIVE.
NOW, TAKE MY HAND, LET MY IMMORTALITY BE YOURS.
TAKE IT, MANHUNTER... TAKE IT NOW!
NEVER!
I WONDERED HOW FAR YOU WOULD GO, DETECTIVE. NOW I KNOW.
CAPTURE THE BATMAN, MY MINDLESS MUTATES!
HE MUST NOT ESCAPE HERE ALIVE!
6

THERE ARE *SIX* OF THEM, EACH BIGGER AND MORE POWERFUL THAN HE. HE KNOWS HE CAN TAKE ONE. HE HOPES FOR TWO. MORE THAN THAT *EVEN HE* CONSIDERS IMPOSSIBLE.



STILL HE IS THE BATMAN, AND IN THE PAST HE HAS *BEATEN* ALL THE HEAVILY-STACKED ODDS, AND NO MATTER HOW MANY *DEFEATS* HE SUFFERS, HE WILL *NEVER* GIVE UP THE FIGHT.

THE FIRST BLOW SENDS HIM *SPRAWLING*. THE SECOND CRACKS A RIB. THE THIRD PUNCTURES A LUNG, AND THE FOURTH BRINGS HIM TO HIS KNEES. BUT HE CAN'T GIVE UP. HE CAN'T GIVE NO MORE!

YOU ASKED, SALTZER, HOW I COULD RESPECT A FOE. CAN YOU SEE WHY NOW?
SUMMON A PHYSICIAN AND HAVE HIM APPLY MY SPECIAL MEDICINES.
I WANT THE BATMAN HEALTHY BEFORE THE FINAL CONVERSION BEGINS.
THEY FEEL THE EXHAUSTING HEAT LONG BEFORE THEY REACH THE MINES...
ALWAYS KNEW THAT MASKED CREEP WAS NUTS, BUT I NEVER FIGURED HIM FOR A TRAITOR.
DON'T EVER SAY THAT AGAIN, FARADAY... DON'T EVEN THINK THAT!
ROBIN, THIS ISN'T THE TIME FOR FIGHTING.
SORRY, KITTEN, BUT IT'S TOO LATE!
THAT KID'S BEEN BEGGING FOR A FIGHT.
AND THIS IS AS GOOD A TIME AS ANY!
C'MON, KID, LET'S SCRAMBLE 'EM!

ADVERTISEMENT

GREEN ARROW
"AN ARROW IN TIME"
THE CABLES! THE TRAM WILL FALL. NO WONDER THE KIDS ARE SCARED. I WOULD BE, TOO.
ONE JOB AT A TIME. FIRST A FEW GRAPPLING ARROWS THEY'LL HOLD THE CABLE CAR, TEMPORARILY
NEXT...SOMETHING TO KEEP THE KIDS' MINDS OFF THE CABLE CAR.
GLAD MY EFFORTS WERE ON TARGET
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IT'S A GOOD THING THESE MUTATES ARE AS DUMB AS THEY LOOK!
YOU KNOW IT, KID. NOT ONE OF 'EM PICKED UP ON YOUR HAND SIGNALS!
I FIGURED SOMETHING WAS UP WHEN THE BATMAN SIGNALLED YOU, BUT I COULDN'T TELL WHAT.
HE WAS STALLING FOR TIME.. TO PICK UP INFORMATION, AND HE WANTED US OUT OF THE WAY.
NORMALLY I'D GO ALONG WITH HIM, BUT SOMETHING HERE FEELS WRONG!
IT'S A GUT INSTINCT, BUT I THINK WE'RE NEEDED!
IT SEEMS OUR GUESTS HAVE RETURNED.
PERHAPS IT IS BEST TO GIVE THEM A SURPRISE!
DON'T DO IT, FOOL!
I AM FORCED TO AGREE WITH MY FRIENDS, SALTZER. THINGS HERE ARE WRONG!
BUT, UNLIKE YOU, I WANT THEM CORRECTED!
SHOOTS!
THAT TRANQUILIZER BULLET SHOULD KEEP YOU ASLEEP LONG ENOUGH FOR ME TO DIRECT THOSE THREE.
THERE ISN'T TIME FOR THEM TO WANDER LOST...
NOT IF THEY WISH TO SAVE THE BATMAN'S LIFE!

FACE IT, KID-- WE'RE LOST.
NO, I'M SURE IT'S DOWN THIS WAY... EH?
ROBIN, HEAD FOR ROOM C. HURRY!
HUH? THAT'S TALIA'S VOICE!
CAN THAT WITCH BE TRUSTED?
EVEN IF SHE CAN'T BE, WHAT CHOICE DO WE HAVE?
SHE CARES FOR BATMAN.. HE MUST BE HERE.
YOU WERE RIGHT, CAT. THERE HE IS, IN THAT OVERSIZED SHIPPING CRATE!
GOD! THAT'S ONE OF THE CYLINDERS USED TO CREATE MUTATES! I'VE SEEN THEM BEFORE.*
KRSSH!
* BATMAN: [illegible]
THEN WE HAVEN'T GOT ANY TIME! WE'VE GOT TO FREE HIM!
YOU THREE HAVE COME FAR, BUT YOU SHALL PROGRESS NO FURTHER!
MUTATES, SLAY THEM -- DO IT NOW!!
MEANWHILE
TRAPPED... BLAST. THE LID'S TOO HEAVY TO BUDGE...
...AND IF I DON'T MISS MY GUESS, THAT SMELL I'M PICKING UP IS GAS!
AL GHUL'S TRYING TO TURN ME INTO ONE OF HIS MINDLESS ZOMBIES!!

STILL, THERE'S A CHANCE. MAYBE STEEL WON'T GIVE, BUT--
AH, ONCE AGAIN I FIND MYSELF CONGRATULATING YOU, DETECTIVE.
YOU HAVE A PENCHANT FOR PERFORMING THE IMPOSSIBLE!
I TRY, AL GHÛL. I TRY
ALL RIGHT, FRIEND. CALL OFF YOUR MUTATES. IT'S ALL OVER.
YOU OKAY BATMAN?
ALMOST AS GOOD AS YOU THREE. YOU'VE DONE A GOOD JOE, ALL OF YOU.
BUT NOW WE HAVE TO DECIDE WHAT TO DO WITH HIM AND ME
YOU ARE ALL ALIVE, THANK GOD!
SO, TALIA, YOU WOULD SIDE AGAINST YOUR FATHER?
NO, NOT AGAINST YOU. FOR BATMAN.
YOU PUT US TOGETHER SO MANY TIMES. YOU WANTED THE BATMAN TO FALL IN LOVE WITH ME...
.. WHILE I SPIED ON HIM FOR YOU.
COULDN'T YOU GUESS THAT I WOULD COME TO LOVE HIM?
NOT MORE THAN YOU DO YOUR OWN FATHER.
BUT YOU HAVE NOW COMMITTED YOURSELF. WHAT DO YOU INTEND DOING WITH ME? IMPRISONMENT? TORTURE? MURDER?
11

WHAT SHE WANTS WON'T ENTER INTO THIS, AL GHUL. THE GOOD OL' U.S. WANTS YOU ON ABOUT A THOUSAND CHARGES...
MAYBE EVEN MORE SINCE I STARTED HUNTING FOR YOU!
YOU ARE A GOOD AGENT, KING FARADAY, BUT SOON TO BE A DEAD ONE!
I'VE GOT THEM ALL COVERED, SIR. AND I'LL SHOOT IF EVEN ONE DARES MOVE.
SALTZER?
I SHOULDN'T HAVE JUST USED A TRANQUILIZER ON YOU
DON'T MOVE, TALIA, I WILL EVEN SHOOT YOU IF I MUST.
I SAID DON'T MOVE, YOU LITTLE WITCH!
DIDN'T YOU HEAR ME? DIDN'T YOU?
TALIA!
SALTZER, YOU SNIVELLING SYCOPHANT! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?
DESPITE ALL SHE HAS DONE, TALIA WAS MY DAUGHTER!
HIS NECK IS BROKEN. YOU KILLED HIM!
HE DESERVED TO DIE!
BUT, HOW IS TALIA? TELL ME QUICKLY, DETECTIVE!
SHE'S BREATHING, BUT JUST, BARELY!

BY THE GODS! THERE CAN BE ONLY ONE HOPE-- THE LAZARUS PIT!!
NO MATTER WHAT, MY DAUGHTER MUST NOT DIE!
THE LAZARUS PIT STANDS BEFORE AL GHŪL LIKE A HUNGRY TIGER. WITH THE PRESS OF A CONSOLE BUTTON, A PLATFORM LOWERS FROM THE CEILING...
YOU SAID ONLY YOU COULD SURVIVE THE PIT.
TRUE! I CAN ONLY BATHE IN ITS CHEMICALS FOR A MINUTE OR MORE.
BUT I WILL EXPOSE HER TO ITS HEALING PROPERTIES FOR ONLY A MOMENT. I DARE NOT RISK MORE.
IT IS TIME. WE MUST PRAY!
TALIA'S CHALK-WHITE BODY QUICKLY DISAPPEARS INTO THE ROILING EMERALD CHEMICALS. THEN...
ENOUGH! SHE MUST BE RAISED!
SHE'S NOT MOVING. IS SHE DEAD?
SHE CANNOT BE. SHE MUST NOT BE!
THEY STARE FOR LONG AGONIZING MINUTES AS RĀS AL GHŪL'S GRIEF VIRTUALLY OVERWHELMS HIM. BUT THEN...
B...BATMAN...
SHE'S ALIVE!
13

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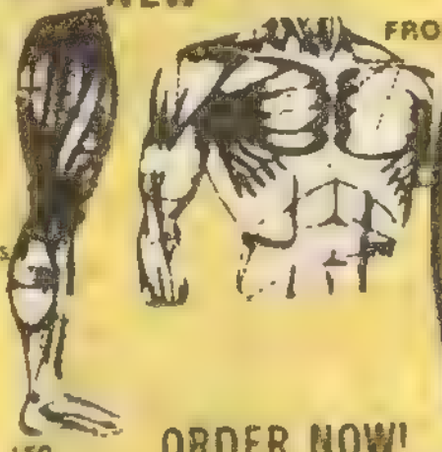

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AND HER FIRST WORDS WERE OF YOU, MANHUNTER.
YOU STOLE MY DAUGHTER FROM ME
THAT IS AN INSULT I WILL NOT BROOK!
FOR THAT YOU MUST DIE!
I DIDN'T STEAL HER, SHE REJECTED YOUR WAYS...
SHE REJECTED YOUR WARPED VALUES!
SHE REJECTED YOU!
ALL OF YOU, GO! GET OFF THE ISLAND, TAKE ALL THE OTHERS AND LEAVE!
THIS FIGHT IS BETWEEN RÄS AL GHÜL AND ME!
AND WHEN I AM DONE HERE, THIS HELL HE'S CREATED WILL BE LITTLE MORE THAN A RESTING PLACE FOR FISH!

HOLD ON, BATMAN. YOU JUST CAN'T ORDER US LIKE THAT.
THIS IS OUR FIGHT, TOO
CATWOMAN .?
THIS ISN'T THE TIME TO ARGUE WITH HIM, ROBIN. THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN THESE TWO HAS TO COME TO AN END NOW
DO AS HE SAYS..WE'LL ROUND UP THE OTHERS AND GET OUT OF HERE.
FOR ONCE, THE CAT-LADY AND I AGREE!
ALL RIGHT, YOU WIN THIS TIME, BATMAN!
BUT, WHEN THIS IS OVER, YOU AND I ARE GOING TO TALK!
AND TALK LIKE WE'VE NEVER DONE BEFORE!
IT'S NOW DOWN TO THE TWO OF US AT ONCE.
AS IT WAS DESTINED!

SLOWLY THEY EDGE APART EYES RIVETED ON EACH OTHER AND NEVER ONCE AVERTING THEIR STEELY GAZE...

RĀ'S AL GHŪL REMEMBERS THE WORDS HE SPOKE TO THAT FOOL, SALTZER.

HIS LONG FINGERS CURL INWARD BECKONING THE BATMAN TO APPROACH.

"HE PLAYS HIS GAME, *LURES* YOU TO HIM." THE BATMAN STEPS FORWARD, AND RĀ'S AL GHŪL FEELS ELATION.

THE WALL IS *BEHIND* HIM NOW, AND RĀ'S AL GHŪL APPEARS LOST WITH NOWHERE ELSE TO GO.

"...IT REVEALS WEAKNESS."

IT IS OVER, DETECTIVE-- ALMOST BEFORE IT HAS *BEGUN!*

SPANG

"YOU OBSERVE HIS MOVES, YOU LEARN HOW HE THINKS, AND WHEN HE IS READY, YOU STRIKE"

"--YOU STRIKE AND SLAY HIM!"

KLANG!

VERY GOOD, DETECTIVE. YOU ARE AN ADMIRABLE OPPONENT

ADMIRABLE, BUT MERELY *MORTAL.*

WHILE I AM MORE THAN MORTAL, I HAVE BECOME IMMORTAL!
AND AS SUCH, I CANNOT BE DEFEATED!
AND NOW, TIME GROWS SHORT. EVEN AS YOU DIE HERE, MY SOLDIERS INVADE WAYNE ENTERPRISES WITH ORDERS TO DESTROY ANYONE WHO GETS IN THEIR WAY.
WHO WILL BE THE FIRST TO DIE? CAROLINE CROWN, YOUR SECRETARY WHO I HAD BLACKMAILED TO BETRAY YOU? LUCIUS FOX, YOUR FRIEND WHO I HAD BEATEN TO CONFUSE YOU?
PERHAPS ALFRED, YOUR BUTLER... YES, HE WILL BE THE ONE. WHAT DO YOU THINK, DETECTIVE?
THE BATMAN SAYS NOTHING, BUT HE REACTS LIKE A COILED SPRING, HIS POWERFUL LEGS SHOOTING OUTWARD!
WHOOM!
THEN SLOWLY, PAINFULLY, THE MASKED MANHUNTER RISES TO HIS FEET...
YOU GRINNING GHOUL! YOU AND I CAN FIGHT, BUT WHEN YOU ATTACK MY FRIENDS--
-- THAT'S WHEN I STOP PLAYING GAMES!
THIS THEN IS THE END. WHOSOEVER FALLS INTO THE PIT OF LIFE SHALL DIE A MOST HORRIBLE DEATH.
FOR NO HUMAN CAN SURVIVE ITS CAUSTIC CHEMICALS FOR VERY LONG.
WHAM!
AND NOW, BATMAN, IT IS YOUR TURN TO DIE!
17
2ND

SAVE MONEY: SUBSCRIBE NOW!

NIGHT IN GOTHAM CITY. THE BATMAN IS ON A CASE...
THE FACTS ARE CLEAR, COMMISSIONER GORDON. THE DEMAND FOR DC COMICS IS GREATER THAN THE SUPPLY.
I HOPE YOU CAN FIND A SOLUTION, BATMAN. THE KIDS ARE COUNTING ON YOU!
TO GET THE REAL STORY, I'LL GO TO THE SOURCE! CAROL FEIN AT DC IS THE PERSON TO SEE.
THE NEXT MORNING...
SO, YOU SEE, OUR NEW SUBSCRIPTION PLAN WAS CREATED TO TAKE THE RISK OUT OF FINDING YOUR FAVORITE COMICS EACH MONTH!
HMM... NOW THEY COME RIGHT TO YOUR DOOR! LOOKS LIKE THE CASE IS SOLVED, CAROL!
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THE BATMAN FALLS, CLUTCHING THE PIT'S EDGE FOR DEAR LIFE, BUT...
ANOTHER VALIANT EFFORT IN SELF-PRESERVATION... VALIANT BUT WASTED.
AGAIN I ADMIRE YOU, DETECTIVE. YOU GO TO YOUR DOOM WITHOUT PLEADING FOR LIFE
RA'S AL GHUL'S POWERFUL ARMS PUSH HARDER, PRESSING THE BATMAN'S HEAD EVER DEEPER INTO THE SWIRLING PIT...
I FEAR I WILL NOT FIND AN ADVERSARY OF YOUR CALIBRE FOR MANY DECADES TO COME.
BUT, THE BATMAN HAS TRAINED LONG AND HARD FOR MANY YEARS. HIS MUSCLES BUNCH, TIGHTEN AND LOCK ABOUT THE MADMAN'S WAIST...
AND WITH A SUDDEN TWIST..
...THERE IS THE PAINFUL SCREAM WHICH COMES A MOMENT BEFORE DEATH ITSELF!
YYYAAAGGGHHH!

THE BATMAN FALLS WEAKLY TO THE GROUND, SICK AT THE STENCH OF BURNING FLESH. HE HAS WON BUT AT THIS MOMENT THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO JOY...
...T... MAY HAVE BEEN FOR THE BEST.
TALIA? YOU SAW?
ONLY THE END. HE WAS A PROUD MAN. HE WOULD HAVE PREFERRED DYING IN BATTLE.
STILL, NO ONE SHOULD HAVE DIED LIKE... THAT.
HIS ENEMY'S DAUGHTER WRAPS HER ARMS AROUND HIM, HELPING HIM RISE ONCE MORE TO HIS FEET. THE BATTLE IS DONE, AND NOW IS THE TIME TO LEAVE...
BUT...
NNNOOOO!
HE ALSO SEES SOME SMALL DEMON FROM HELL, BURNING STILL, WEEPING AND [illegible] WITH HIS FLESH IS SEARED AND CHARRED AND HIS BITTER ACRID STENCH [illegible] ABOUT HIM
AGGGGHH! BATMANNN, MY BODY STILL BURNNNSS ... BUT I STILL LIVE... I STILL LIVE!!!
I HURTTTT, BATMANNN, I AM IN PAINNNN...
AND I WANTTT TO KILLLLLL!!
MY GOD!
TALIA, LOOK AT HIS EYES! WHATEVER IS IN THE PIT... IS DRIVEN HIM INSANE!!
19

EVERYTHING HE TOUCHES BURNS .. HAVE TO KEEP HIM AT A DISTANCE.
AGGGHHH!! I AM IN PAINNN, BATMANNN. IT BURNNSS ME FROM INSIDE!!
YOU MUSTT FEEL AS I FEEL, BATMANNN. YOU MUST SUFFER AS I SUFFER.!!
NOTHING SURVIVES ME NOWW.!! WHATEVER I TOUCH-- BURNNSS!!
YOU ARE A VALIANTTT FOE... LETTT ME EMBRACE YOU... LETTT ME SHOW YOU THE SPOILSSS OF VICTORY!!
COME TO ME, BATMANNN.!!
QUARTERSTAFF BURNING... ISN'T THERE ANY WAY TO STOP HIM?
TALIA, GET OUT OF HERE, NOW-- HE'S INSANE... HE CAN GO AFTER YOU NEXT!
BUT I CAN NOT LEAVE YOU HERE.
I SAID GO! UNTIL YOU LEAVE, I CAN'T FIGHT!
FOR A LONG MOMENT SHE HESITATES, REMEMBERING THE LOVE SHE ONCE FELT FOR THIS THING THAT HAD BEEN HER FATHER. BUT THEN SHE TURNS AND RUNS...
ONLY ONE CHANCE... MY HEELS ARE INSULATED IF THEY CAN GET THROUGH HIS BURNING SKIN-- KNOCK HIM OUT...
ANOTHER WORTHY ATTEMPTT, DETECTIVE! BUTT I FELT NOTHING!!
SLAMM!
AGGH! MY SOLES... BURNING MY FEET!!!

CAN'T STAND ... TOO MUCH PAIN...
TOO MUCH PAINNN? NO, DETECTIVE ...YOU DO NOT KNOW WHAT PAIN ISSSS!
MY BODY BURNSS MY BODY PLEADSS FOR AN ENDD TO THE AGONY IT SUFFERSSS.
LET ME SHOW YOU WHAT TRUE PAINN ISSS LIKE, DETECTIVE!!!
THEN LET US BOTH DIE TOGETHER!
RAGGHH!! MY SIDE... BURNING... MY RIBS... THROBBING ON FIRE...
IT WAS ALWAYS FATED TO END LIKE THIS... FOR WE ARE TOO MUCH THE SAME.
WE ARE BOTH POWERFULLL... BOTH SUPERIOR TO ALL AROUNDD USSS!
I COULD NEVER DEFEATTT YOU AS YOU COULDDD NEVER DEFEATTT ME.!!
WE HADDD TO DIE TOGETHER IN ONE FATEFUL BATTLE!!
NO!!
WHAT?
SKRAGG!
WHATTT HAVE YOU DONE?? MY FACE!! MY FACE!!
BRAMMM!
21

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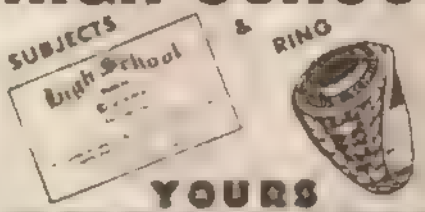

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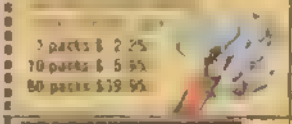

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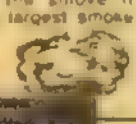

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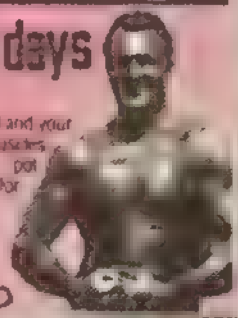

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YAAGGGHHHH!!
RA'S AL GHÛL IGNITED THE PIT... EVERYTHING IS GOING UP!
BATMAN, I KEPT WAITING... PRAYING.
MOVE IT! GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE!

HIS PAIN *OVERWHELMS* HIM AT LAST, AND AS THE CHOPPER *CLEARS* WHAT REMAINS OF INFINITY ISLAND, THE BATMAN SLIPS INTO MERCIFUL UNCONSCIOUSNESS...

"HIS NAME WAS RAS AL GHUL AND HE WAS BORN IN THE PITS OF HELL. MAY HE RETURN FROM WHENCE HE CAME."

--Al Talmün, 17th Century Historian.

IT IS SEVERAL DAYS LATER BEFORE CONSCIOUSNESS RETURNS TO THE
YOU SEEM TO BE RECOVERING
JUST BARELY. SOME MY FRIENDS HAVE PAINS
DR. DUNDEE DOESN'T KNOW HOW YOU DO IT. IF YOUR BURNS WERE AN INCH CLOSER TO YOUR HEART, THE BATMAN WOULD RETIRE.
BUT THEY WEREN'T. AND THE GOOD DOCTOR IS GIVEN TO WORRYING TOO MUCH.
I HAVE TO ASK BECAUSE DETAILS WERE A BIT FUZZY NEAR THE END. BUT EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED?
I'M NOT SURE, BUT I GATHER SOMETHING ON INFINITY ISLAND REACTIVATED ITS TWIN VOLCANOES THEY BLEW!
AND JUST AS YOU AND TALIA TOOK OFF, THE ISLAND EXPLODED... AND THEN SUNK.
WHAT ABOUT THE PEOPLE? AND RA'S AL GHUL'S MUTATES?
CATWOMAN, KING FARADAY, AND I GOT MOST OF THEM OFF THE ISLAND IN TIME.
FARADAY ACCOMPANIED THEM TO A GOVERNMENT REHABILITATION CAMP.
BY THE WAY, HE SENT US A WIRE -- COLLECT, THANKING YOU FOR YOUR HELP. HELP? YOU DID EVERYTHING!
THAT'S OKAY. FOR FARADAY A THANK YOU IS DOWNRIGHT GUSHING WITH PRAISE.
AND WHERE'S CATWOMAN? IS SHE ALL RIGHT?
SHE WENT OFF, BRUCE.. ASKED ME NOT TO TELL YOU WHERE. SHE'S AFRAID YOU'LL GO AFTER HER.
BRUCE SHE CARES FOR YOU.
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BUT THERE'S SOMETHING BETWEEN SELINA KYLE AND BRUCE WAYNE, SOMETHING BETWEEN BATMAN AND CATWOMAN SHE WON'T SPEAK ABOUT.
SOMETHING THAT'S OBVIOUSLY KEEPING YOU TWO APART.
IT IS TIME FOR ME TO PART AS WELL.
YOU? BUT WHY? WITHOUT YOUR FATHER, WHAT WILL YOU DO? WHERE WILL YOU GO?
I HAVE MONEY... MORE THAN ENOUGH.
BUT WITHOUT MY FATHER KEEPING ME YOUNG, I WILL FINALLY GROW OLD...
I WISH TO KNOW WHAT THAT IS LIKE.
AND FOR NOW, I PREFER LEARNING HOW THAT FEELS ... ALONE.
TALIA, PLEASE-- ANYTIME YOU WANT, YOU'RE WELCOME HERE.
I THANK YOU, MY LOVE. PERHAPS WE WILL MEET AGAIN SOON.
AND THAT LEAVES YOU, DICK. YOU GOING, TOO? AFTER ALL, BEFORE THIS CAPER BEGAN, YOU MOVED OUT.
NO, I THINK I'LL STAY, FOR A WHILE AT LEAST.
TO TALK TO ME? TO ARGUE ABOUT YOUR LEAVING COLLEGE?
NO, WE CAN TALK ANOTHER TIME. WE STILL HAVE YEARS AHEAD OF US.
IT'S A BEAUTIFUL DAY. SO WHY DON'T TWO OLD FRIENDS GO OUT AND ENJOY IT... LIKE THOSE PEOPLE DOWN THERE?
MR. GRAYSON, I THINK THAT'S AN EXCELLENT IDEA. EXCEPT...
EXCEPT WHAT?
IF YOU DON'T MIND, I DON'T THINK I'M READY FOR JOGGING!
THE END

NEXT ISSUE ON SALE DURING THE FIRST WEEK IN MARCH

BAT SIGNALS

L-735

Dear Paul:

After reading *Batman* #330, this series had to be placed high on my list of comic-reading priorities again. Without the use of super-villains (the lack thereof was a point of some dissatisfaction in previous letters), you've succeeded in providing *Batman* with an undercurrent of tension. Your supporting characters, from Lucius Fox and Robin to Carolyn Crown and Talia are giving this continuing drama a wonderful feeling of intrigue, mystery.

Forgive my past criticisms, will you? I've got egg on my face, but at least I'm enjoying the series once more. I'm greatly concerned about the decision of Robin to drop out of Hudson U. Oh, Robin's got a fine mind inside that head of his, and he's totally responsible, so I'm not worried about his intellectual growth. But is this going to drive a wedge between him and Bruce? Please, we don't want that. Two *New Teen Titans* stories (the preview, and issue #1) had references to this "wedge" that I speak of. It seems that Robin believes he's not being treated as a man by Bruce. How can this be? They've always had a perfect relationship.

Talia's reappearance without her father is one event that I always wanted to see. I've always wanted to see some interaction between Batman and Talia without Rā's Al Ghūl lurking in the darkness. I'm completely thrown off by references to the death of Rā's, however. His last appearance was in *Brave & Bold* #159, right? He was fine, then. What is the explanation?

Carolyn Crown's betrayal of her boss reminds us of the battles that civilian Bruce Wayne has to fight. Mr. Falstaff must have paid her well for the services she rendered. It's a pity. Carolyn was always a more interesting secretary than Margaret because, unlike her predecessor, she seemed slightly interested in Bruce. Her pretty face may soon grace the unemployment office in Gotham, that is, if Bruce does find out.

For now, the Batman is safe from all of Gotham's hit-men; Archie Skyler never savored revenge. There are matters that have to be cleared up, though. I hope you'll provide the resolutions; Batman and Robin must see eye to eye. I hope that Talia can be accommodated as a regular supporting character here, without being a source of final discord. I'm watching and waiting.

Michael Burkhalter
3994 La Jolla Village Drive
La Jolla, CA 92037

Apparently you missed Rā's "death" in DETECTIVE #490, Mike, and as to the problems of Batman and Robin's relationship, our next correspondent has them well pinned-down...—PL.

* * * * *

Dear Sir,

Batman and Robin bickering? Is there no team safe from discord at DC anymore? In recent years DC Comics has shown a disenchanting tendency to inject artificial conflicts into series where the situations and the characters do not require it, rather than having the conflict be a logical outgrowth of the characters and situations themselves. However, I find in this case (surprise!) that Batman and Robin's tiff is perfectly in keeping with their characters. After all, Batman has always been protective of his young ward's education. "I wish Robin were here with me, but he had a book report to work on—his school work must come first! A good education is one thing not even the cleverest criminal in the world can steal from you!" (TEC #366) Since then, seeing fellow playboy Oliver Queen cheated out of his fortune and narrowly escaping from having his own empire dismantled by Hugo Strange could have only hardened Batman's conviction that a college education is the only truly secure legacy he can leave Dick Grayson. Hence his constant directive to Robin to keep his high school grades up—or no more crook catching! True, Robin isn't a high school kid anymore, but Bruce Wayne is Dick Grayson's father, in fact if not in the eyes of the law, and like any father he tends to see his ward as the same twelve-year-old he took under his wing. That Bruce himself put finishing his education ahead of starting his crusade, in deference to the wishes of his mentor Harvey Harris, makes it all the more difficult for Bruce to understand why his Robin is not extending the same cooperation toward his mentor.

Yet I can see Robin's side of it. For years he has seen Batman and his partner Superman never hesitate to shove their private lives aside when they interfered with their superhero careers. So hadn't the time come for him to do likewise now that he had reached virtual adulthood? After all, carrying on his own career at New Carthage, taking in Barbara Gordon and Duela Dent as partners and confidantes, and running the Teen Titans—didn't he have to take care of all those matters without any help from Batman? I can also well understand Robin's trepidation at Batman's cozying up to Talia. True, the League of Assassins poses no threat to Batman as long as Talia heads it—but Talia and Batman can't really be certain that Rā's Al Ghūl is dead! And has Bats utterly forgotten a certain Selina Kyle, who could very possibly come back and announce: all's forgiven, let's pick up where we left off? If she does, Selina's not going to lower her life insurance premiums. Selina's aversion to murder would prevent her from harming Talia—but the Demon's Daughter is bound by no such inhibitions. The mere appearance that Talia would prefer Miss Kyle out of the way could endanger Selina. The Batman would undoubtedly split from Talia if there were the slightest possibility she ordered the demise of one of his friends—and Talia has zealous underlings who would not be enchanted at the prospect of having their most hated enemy become their boss. Any way you look at it, if Selina comes back now she could well join Kathy Kane as another of Bruce Wayne's old flames to become an innocent victim of the League of Assassins.

Gary Thompson
3701 Roosevelt ; Dearborn, MI 48124

With this, we're cut short by our annual bit of business below, so we'll just say see you next issue, for a 25-page guest shot by Garcia Lopez, with script by Batman's new writer, Roy Thomas.—Paul Levitz.

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1. Title of Publication: BATMAN
1A. Publication No. 045 340
2. Date of Filing: October 1, 1980
3. Frequency of Issue: Monthly
3A. No. of Issues Published Annually: 12
3B. Annual Subscription Price: $7.95
4. Location of Known Office of Publication: 75 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10019
5. Location of the Headquarters or General Business Offices of the Publishers: 75 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10019
6. Names and Complete Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor: Publisher: DC COMICS INC., 75 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10019; Editor: Paul Levitz, 75 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10019; Managing Editor: Joe Orlando, 75 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10019
7. Owner: Dc Comics Inc., wholly owned by Warner Communications, Inc., a publicly held company, both at 75 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10019
8. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages or Other Securities: None
9. For Completion by Nonprofit Organizations Authorized to Mail at Special Rates: Not Applicable
10. Extent and Nature of Circulation:
10A. Total No. Copies Printed (Net Press Run): Average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 301,102. Actual no. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 275,086. 10B. Paid Circulation: 1. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors and counter sales: Average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 127,274. Actual no. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 110,175. 2. Mail Subscriptions: Average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 2,025. Actual no. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 2,349. 10C. Total Paid Circulation (Sum of 10B1 and 10B2): Average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 129,299. Actual no. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 112,524. 10D. Free Distribution by Mail, Carrier or Other Means, Samples, Complimentary, and Other Free Copies: Average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 127. Actual no. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 127. 10E. Total Distribution (Sum of C and D): Average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 129,426. Actual no. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 112,651. 10F. Copies Not Distributed: 1. Office Use, Left Over, Unaccounted, Spoiled After Printing: Average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 3,608. Actual no. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 4,070. 2. Returns From News Agents: Average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 168,068. Actual no. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 158,365. 10G. Total (Sum of E, F1 and 2—should equal net press run shown in A): Average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 301,102. Actual no. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 275,086.
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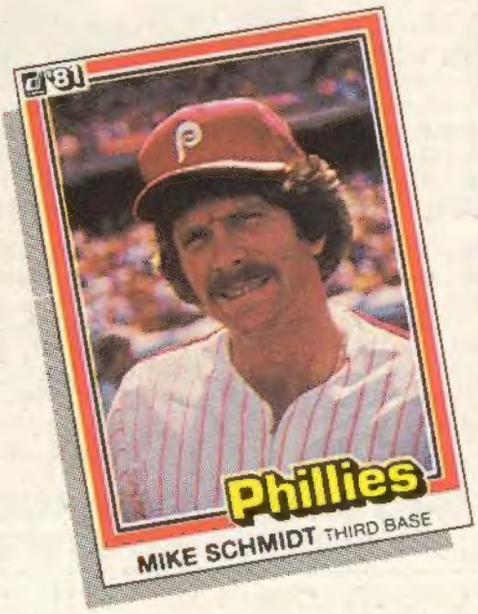

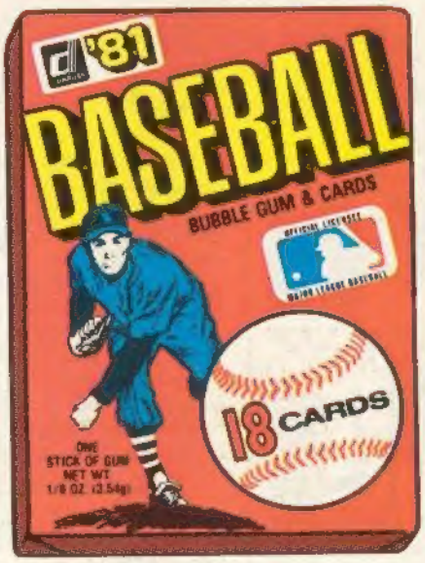

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